

Notes from the President

Leo Benatar, 86, finally a 'master' of IE

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Every Georgia Tech Commencement is filled with success stories. Each graduate's journey to that moment when he or she accepts the diploma before classmates, friends, and family is unique. But few have a more entertaining story to tell than Leo Benatar, a devoted friend to Georgia Tech since he graduated in 1951 with his bachelor's degree in industrial engineering.

Leo and his wife, Louise, are members of The Hill Society (Georgia Tech's most prestigious giving society) and established the Leo and Louise Benatar Endowment for the Stewart School of Industrial & Systems Engineering. If those names sound familiar, it could be because you've noticed that the east entrance of McCamish Pavilion, the site of Commencement, is named after the couple.

Through an unfortunate confluence of events, Leo didn't receive the master's degree in IE for which he finished work in 1957. You can read about the details [here](#), but suffice it to say that Georgia Tech made it right on Friday night at the master's/Ph.D. ceremony. Seventeen members of his family and friends watched as Leo — now 86 and retired since 1996 after a highly successful manufacturing career — received his degree.

As his offspring have suggested, it's time to update his résumé for his next job interview!

Leo's hand was one of almost 3,100 I had the privilege of shaking during three ceremonies May 6-7 at Georgia Tech's 251st Commencement ceremonies. We also presented three honorary degrees. On Friday evening, Michael Tennenbaum, a Tech grad who's achieved remarkable things in the financial world, received the first of the three. John and Mary Rockett Brock, co-chairs of the record-setting Campaign Georgia Tech, were awarded theirs on Saturday morning, the 34th and 35th such honors conferred in Georgia Tech's 130-year history.

In 1979, the Institute awarded its first honorary degree to then-President Jimmy Carter. The Brocks became the first couple to receive honorary Georgia Tech degrees. Mary went right to work afterward as our Commencement speaker. John Holdren (Friday), director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker (Saturday afternoon) spoke at the other ceremonies.

Commencement, a great communal event, helps forge bonds that won't be broken, and I sincerely hope everyone involved relishes those powerful moments as much as I do.

G. P. "Bud" Peterson
President, Georgia Tech